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# FOCUS

ON MENTAL RETARDATION

ARC-Nebraska, 521 S. 14th St., Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

May, 1986

## L.B. 1177 BECOMES LAW

On Thursday, April 24, 1986, Governor Kerrey signed LB 1177. The signing culminated very intense efforts by People First of Nebraska to modernize the terminology regarding mental retardation in state law.

After deciding to work to get rid of terms like "idiot" and "moron" from law, People First asked ARC-Nebraska Director David Powell for assistance. Powell helped provide technical support in drafting their bill. Members were also coached as to how a bill becomes law. From there the self-advocacy group sought a sponsor for the bill.

Senator Harold Sieck, himself the parent of an individual with mental retardation, agreed to sponsor the bill. The bill moved swiftly thru the legislative process. Support for the bill was overwhelming and consequently it passed.

LB 1177 will take effect in July of 1986.



People First members Walter Larsen, Helen Tracy, Nancy Ward, Cheryl Piwenitsky, Micky Ramos, Advisor Shirley Dean, and President Steve Richards meet with Governor Kerrey to sign LB 1177 into Law.

## IT TAKES US ALL

Late in 1985 the parents of Bill (not the individual's real name) received notification from the Public School that they would be terminating Bill in January. Bill had just turned 21 years of age and the school would not carry him past the end of the current semester. This notice was anticipated but it still brought forth a sense of urgency for the family.

Bill had been evaluated by Vocational Rehabilitation Services and his file indicated "No Employment Potential". If that was not difficult enough, the family lives in a community which has a long list of adults waiting for services. Bill could not receive an automatic transition from school into traditional workshop training.

It was time to face reality. Bill could be placed on the waiting list; he could stay home and most likely lose skills, or he could seek work on his own.

The family talked it over. The decision to not sit and wait was made. Too much was at stake. The parents called the school and asked for whatever transitional supports the school could develop. Bill's father and mother began looking for employment possibilities. They talked with neighbors, friends, and business acquaintances for possible job leads. Their search turned up a possible work situation that fit their son's abilities and his previous experiences.

In the same community where they live is a college. The school's grounds maintenance department was willing to look at Bill. Their personnel had not had any previous exposure to Bill but they were willing to give him a try if certain conditions could be met. The head of the grounds department wanted Bill's supervisor to be non-college personnel. In addition, the work would be part-time and probably would last from Spring through the Fall.

more on page 2

